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C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 000623

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/FO, NEA/ELA
ALSO FOR IO A/S BRIMMER
P FOR DRUSSELL, RRANGASWAMY
USUN FOR WOLFF/GERMAIN/SCHEDLBAUER
NSC FOR SHAPIRO, MCDERMOTT
DRL/NESA FOR WHITMAN
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STATE PASS USAID FOR LAUDATO/NANDY/SCOTT

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TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [LE](#)
SUBJECT: LEBANON: PREPARATIONS FOR ELECTIONS

Classified By: Ambassador Michele J. Sison for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) In the final UN-sponsored election forum before the June 7 election, UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon (UNSCOL) Michael Williams told the donor community that the current security situation in the country appeared good, but noted it would not be a surprise to see an increase in tensions before voting begins. He was encouraged by the minimal level of violence thus far, and was confident that the security forces would meet the challenges on elections day. The elections technical advisers and representatives from several international observer missions gave briefings that indicated all is ready for the June 7 vote.

¶2. (SBU) In a separate event on June 3 attended by Poloff, the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE) NGO announced the launching of the Arab network of election monitors and experts. This network, which includes representatives from 17 Arab countries, will not only monitor Lebanon's June 7 parliamentary elections but also monitor future elections throughout the region. End Summary.

ELECTIONS PREPARATIONS PROCEEDING SMOOTHLY

¶3. (C) In a June 3 UN-sponsored election forum, UNSCOL Michael Williams told the international donor community that all preparations for June 7 are complete. Williams confirmed that Interior Minister Ziad Baroud will announce results on Monday, June 8 district by district, rather than waiting until data for all districts are available. Williams also confirmed that more than 50,000 army and police will be deployed around the country on election day. Williams said that although he was pleased with the minimal incidents of violence so far, he is concerned that tensions might increase in the country before June 7. Interior Minister Baroud is "geared up for Sunday," Williams reported, and is confident that preparations are going well.

¶4. (SBU) UNDP Chief Technical Advisor Carmina Sanchis reported that 11,500 local polling officials have been trained, and noted that an advertising campaign asking voters to be patient while battling the expected June 7 heavy

traffic would launch June 3. According to IFES Country Director Richard Chambers, there are 3,103 international and domestic journalists, 2,086 national observers, 255 international observers, and 23 special visitors accredited to cover the voting thus far.

UPDATE ON OBSERVATION MISSIONS

15. (C) Observation missions represented at the meeting included the EU, NDI, Turkey, and the Arab League (Carter Center was not present due to the airport arrival of President and Mrs. Carter the same afternoon). All noted the relatively calm campaigning so far. Both the EU and NDI said that although they will pay particular attention to districts where the vote is expected to be close, both observation missions plan to monitor a variety of districts (i.e., "hot spots" and these areas expected to be "safe seats"). The 12-member Arab League delegation and 8-member Turkish delegation will begin their work on June 5. All observation missions said they will make a statement or release a report on the afternoon of June 8, the day after the elections.

CONCERNS OVER FORGED IDs

16. (C) Some embassy representatives expressed their concerns regarding the recent reports of forged identity cards. (Note: Several media outlets reported on June 3 the discovery of "dozens" of forged identity cards. The issue was first raised by Prime Minister Siniora during a cabinet session the evening of June 2. End Note.) Williams said Minister Baroud is focused on this issue.

"ARAB FACE" TO OBSERVATION WORK

17. (SBU) At a separate event on June 3, the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE) announced the launching of the Arab network of election monitors and experts. This network, which includes 35 elections experts from 17 Arab countries, will not only observe Lebanon's June 7 parliamentary elections, and reported that the network would so monitor future elections across the region. LADE Secretary General Ziad Abdul Samad proclaimed that election monitoring is no longer just a "Western concept," and reported that the network would bring an "Arab face" to observation work.

SISON